

infected by the ardor of his troops, he was unable to resist a contagion so much in harmony with all his antecedents, and to attack not only his leader in many a time of peril, but also the sovereign who had forwarded his career through every grade of the army.

The facts of the case were these : —

On the 11th of March Key, being at Besançon, learned that Napoleon was at Lyons. To those who doubted whether his troops would fight against their old comrades he said, "They *shall* fight! I will take a musket from a grenadier and begin the action myself! I will run my sword to the hilt in the body of the first man who hesitates to fire!" At the same time he wrote to the Minister of War at Paris that he hoped "to see a fortunate close to this mad enterprise."

He then advanced to Lons-le-Saulnier, where, on the night between the 13th and 14th of March, not quite three days after his vehement protestations of fidelity, he received, without hesitation, a letter from Bonaparte, inviting him, by his old appellation of the "Bravest of the Brave," to join his standard. With this invitation Ney complied, and published an order of the day that declared the cause of the Bourbons, which he had sworn to defend, lost forever.

It is pleaded in extenuation of Ney's defection that both his officers and men were beyond his control, and determined to join their old Master; but in that case he might have given up his command, and retired in the same honorable way that Marshals Macdonald and Marmont and several other generals did.<sup>1</sup> But even among his own officers Ney had an example set him, for many of them, after remonstrating in vain, threw up their commands. One of them broke his sword in two and threw the pieces at Key's feet, saying, "It is easier for a man of honor to break iron than to break his word."

Napoleon, when at St. Helena, gave a very different reading to these incidents. On this subject he was heard

<sup>1</sup> Marshal Augereau kept himself aloof. He could not be much flattered by the mention made of him in Bonaparte's proclamation to the troops!